DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 577 SO 023 602

TITLE	Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle.
INSTITUTION	Topsfield Foundation, Pomfret, CT. Study Circles Resource Center.
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	33p.; For related materials, see SO 023 600-603.
AVAILABLE FROM	Study Circles Resource Center, Route 169, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 (free).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Citizenship Education; *Discussion Groups; Group Dynamics; *Leaders; Leaders Guides; *Leadership Responsibility; *Political Issues; Program Development; Program Implementation; Public Affairs Education; *Social Problems
IDENTIFIERS	*Study Circles

ABSTRACT

The purpose of these guidelines is to help the reader organize and lead a study circle--a participatory, democratic discussion group that focuses on a social or political issue. It provides detailed instructions on how to organize and lead a successful study circle. Following the introduction, section 2 focuses on the role of the organizer and makes suggestions for creating the study circle: select or develop the written material, recruit 5-20 participants, select the leader, organize the meetings, and establish feedback mechanisms. Section 3 discusses necessary skills for the leader of the study circle. Suggestions and principles of group leadership are identified. Ideas are provided for beginning a study circle, managing it and group discussion, using questions effectively, and concluding. Section 4 focuses on the first session: pros and cons of an organizational meeting, introductions, establishing and modifying goals, and establishing ground rules. Section 5 concerns the final session and addresses synthesis and conclusions, from discussion to action, and oral and written evaluations. Appendixes include information on the role of the participant, six suggestions for further reading, and a list of resources available from the Study Circles Resource Center. (YLB)

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ED 363 577

Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle

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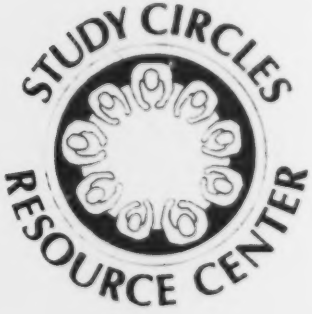

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GUIDELINES FOR

ORGANIZING AND LEADING

A

STUDY CIRCLE

Study Circles Resource Center

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THE STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

The goal of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) is to make study circles a standard form of citizen education in the United States. By promoting the use of these short, democratic, participatory discussion courses on social and political issues, SCRC hopes to contribute to a more enlightened, involved citizenry capable of making decisions based on informed judgement.

The Study Circles Resource Center offers a range of services designed to foster the use of study circles and to encourage organizations and communities to create their own study circle programs. SCRC can provide information on existing study circle course material, assist in developing new reading material for study circles, and provide detailed guidelines for study circle organizers and leaders. A variety of written materials are available. Please contact us if we can be of assistance.

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Here is the beginning of philosophy:
a recognition of the conflicts between men,
a search for their cause,
a condemnation of mere opinion . . .
and the discovery of a standard of judgement.

Epictetus
Discourses
c. 1st Century, A.D.

1. Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to help you organize and lead a study circle – a participatory, democratic discussion group that focuses on a social or political issue.

This guide provides detailed instructions on how to organize and lead a successful study circle. We refer to the person who sets up the meetings and recruits the participants as the "organizer," and the individual who moderates the discussions as the "leader." In some cases one person will take on both roles, but it is preferable to have a different person for each of these key roles.

The first step in creating a study circle – selecting or developing the written material that provides the framework for the discussions – is not dealt with here. Another manual, "Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material," is available to help in this task. If you are interested in organizing a study circle and don't have material, you may want to contact the Study Circles Resource Center's Clearinghouse to find out what material already exists. The Resource Center's staff can help you select, adapt, or write material for your study circle.

The information for this guide was drawn heavily from the sources noted in "Appendix B: Further Reading." Most notable because of their broad experience with the study circle format are the National Issues Forums of the Kettering Foundation and Leonard P. Oliver, author of *Study Circles: Coming Together for Personal Growth and Social Change*.

It should be remembered throughout that the essence of a study circle is not the curriculum but the participants. Identical written material may be used for many groups, but each study circle will reflect the unique backgrounds and insights of its members.

2. Creating the Study Circle: The Role of the Organizer

As the person who attends to all the details, the organizer is the driving force behind a study circle. This individual selects or develops the written material that provides the framework and the substance for the discussions. The organizer also sets the tone for the enterprise and must convey its purpose and goals to the leader and the participants.

If you have organized a public program or a group activity of any kind, you can organize a study circle. Of course, the task will be easier if you are involved in an organization from which participants can be drawn, but a study circle can be made up of friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors, too.

There is no one model for organizing a study circle: shape the program in your community to meet the needs of the sponsoring organization and the participants. While the following suggestions are appropriate for most situations, special circumstances may call for modifications.

Select or Develop the Written Material

Selecting or developing the written material may seem like an enormous undertaking, but you should be able to do it relatively quickly and easily. Your first step should be to contact the Study Circles Resource Center's Clearinghouse to find out whether material on your topic already exists. While you may not find exactly what you want, you might be able to adapt or revise existing material for your group's use.

If no suitable material exists, the Study Circles Resource Center can provide you with another reference, "Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material." The staff of the Resource Center is also available to talk with you and offer advice on how to go about developing material for your study circle.

Another approach is to enlist the aid of someone in your community who might help you develop the material. A person who might not be a good study circle organizer or leader may have a talent for finding articles and writing material for the sessions.

Remember: the essence of a successful study circle is the participants' energy and commitment to the program. The material is important, but a good study circle does not require original or top-quality, professional-looking material.

It does require people who are interested in being active participants.

Recruit 5-20 Participants

Ask potential participants to make a commitment to attend each session, not only for the sake of continuity, but also to create a high level of familiarity and comfort within the group. At the time of recruitment, also be sure to inform them of the goals of the study circle.

Select the Leader

Choosing the leader may be the most important decision that the organizer makes. A bad leader can ruin a study circle and a good one can make it a wonderful experience. Most, of course, are somewhere in between. (For the sake of simplicity, we refer to the leader with feminine pronouns and to the organizer with masculine pronouns.)

The most important consideration in selecting a leader should be her skill and experience in leading discussion. You will want someone whom you have seen in action, whom you know fairly well, or who comes highly recommended by people you trust. As you read the next section on the role of the leader, think of a person you know or know of who might fill this critical role.

You will want to meet with the person to describe the study circle and to make sure she understands the philosophy behind the program. Try to assess how the potential leader would handle the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion. Would she keep the discussion focused? Would she lay aside her ego in order to facilitate the group's progress? Would she draw out the quiet people and restrain the aggressive ones?

When study circle participants are part of an organization, you should consider seeking a leader from outside the group. An outsider may be more impartial, will be less tempted to become engaged in the discussion, and may have an easier time being the referee. On the other hand, a leader chosen from your group will better know both the participants and the organization and may already have the members' respect and trust.

Organize the Meetings

Find a place to meet that has minimal distractions and where participants can chat informally following the sessions. Someone's living room or a meeting room in an office or church are all appropriate places. Each space has certain advantages and disadvantages. A home may be more comfortable, but the possibility of interruption is greater. A meeting room, on the other hand, will often be more spacious, may be "common ground," and can be interruption-free, but may not be as cozy.

Another responsibility of the organizer is setting the date and time for the sessions. Most groups choose evening sessions, but some find that early morning or weekend

gatherings are more convenient. Rather than guessing, consult with the people who might participate. An organizational meeting of interested people can help settle the question of meeting days and times. (See "Beginning: The First Session" for more discussion of an organizational meeting.)

Participants should receive the reading material for the first session a week before the study circle begins so they will have time to read it. You should also distribute ahead of time any other introductory material you want participants to read, perhaps including "Appendix A: The Role of the Participant."

Establish Feedback Mechanisms

Once the study circle actually begins, the organizer's role becomes secondary to the leader's. However, the organizer is in the best position to provide feedback to the leader on her performance and to detect and resolve any difficulties that arise.

The organizer may want to ask the leader to conduct an evaluation at the end of each session or may prefer to do an informal evaluation by sounding out participants individually before or after discussion sessions. Either way, it is important to obtain feedback on an ongoing basis. There should definitely be an evaluation at the halfway point and at the end of the study circle. This is important both to sense how things are going and to allow dissatisfied participants to let off some steam.

3. Moderating the Discussions: The Role of the Leader

Necessary Skills

While the organizer is the creator of a study circle, the leader is the most important person in terms of its success or failure. She keeps everyone involved, makes sure that no one dominates the discussion, insures that old ideas are examined critically and new ones given a chance, and guides the group toward reaching the goals that have been set by the organizer and the group.

The leader does not need to be an expert or even the most knowledgeable person in the group; her ability to manage the discussion is much more important than knowledge of the issue. In fact, content experts tend to have a difficult time staying in the leader role.

However, the leader should be the most well-prepared person in the room. This means thorough familiarity with the reading material, preparation of questions to aid discussion (suggested questions are often supplied with study circle material), previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go, knowledge of the people and personalities in the group, and a clear understanding of the goals of the study circle.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay in order to listen to and truly hear participants. A background of leading small group discussion or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

Beginning

• **"Beginning is half,"** says an old Chinese proverb. Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. The goals of the study circle should be discussed and perhaps modified in the first session, as should the ground rules for discussion. It is important that participants "buy in" right from the beginning. (The first session is so important that the next section of this guide is exclusively devoted to it.)

• **Start and end on time.** If people who make the effort to come on time are punished by having to wait for late-comers to arrive, you can bet they won't arrive on time again. Starting on time encourages participants to take the whole enterprise seriously. Similarly, if you allow a session to drag on beyond the agreed time limit, you are breaking your word and forcing people to choose between walking out before the end or staying for longer than they had anticipated.

• **Consider designating a recorder.** The recorder keeps notes on a blackboard or on an easel. The advantage of writing notes so they can be seen is that participants can

check that their thoughts are correctly understood. Having a recorder is especially helpful for summarizing discussion, which should be done periodically. The role may be rotated throughout the program.

• **Start each session with a brief review of the readings.** This is best done by a participant and is helpful for refreshing the memories of those who read the session's material and for including those who did not. Recapitulation of the main points will also provide a framework for the discussion. Gaps, weaknesses, or errors in the reading material can be pointed out at this time. There is a danger, however, in spending too much time reviewing the readings.

• **Prime someone before the session to start the discussion in case things do not take off naturally.** Some groups are quick starters but others may need some help. Another way to initiate discussion is to ask participants to state briefly their views on an important issue.

Managing the Discussion

• **Keep discussion focused on the session's topic.** Straying too far could cause each session to lose its unique value. A delicate balance is best: don't force the group to stick to the topic too rigidly, but don't allow the discussion to drift. Most people do not regard a "bull session" as a valuable use of their time.

• **Keep the discussion moving along.** When a point has been fully discussed, don't allow the group to beat it into the ground. Move on to something else. You should have prepared some questions that will enable you to broach new ideas gracefully.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading is restraining domineering participants.

• **Do not allow people to call out and gain control of the floor without being recognized.** Discussions can become heated; people want to be heard, and sometimes they will jump in front of others who have been waiting to speak. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated. While raising hands may seem awkward at first, you may want to try it if several people in the group are difficult to restrain. Participants quickly become used to it, and the result will be worth the initial awkwardness. Acknowledging the order in which you will call on people will allow them to relax, but be sure to follow through. Jotting down the list may help.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly in the corner or to be forgotten by the group

without making an attempt to reach the person. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be. If a directed question or two has failed, approach the person during a break. An indication along the line of "I just don't feel up to it tonight," should be respected, but a problem with the group or the process should be addressed.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to misunderstandings and potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint. If you throw your weight behind the ideas of one faction in the study circle, your effectiveness in managing the discussion will be diminished.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep it narrowly focused on the issue at hand. Conflict in a discussion can be exciting, but conflict of personalities is destructive. Since everyone's opinion is

important in a study circle, participants should feel comfortable saying what they really think – even if it's unpopular. If the group starts to gang up on someone, or if you sense that some participants may be afraid to express their views, remind the group that it's important to respect everyone's right to be heard.

• **Be prepared to intervene to help participants clarify vague or confusing statements.** Make sure jargon is translated into terms everyone can understand.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** The point of a study circle is not to come up with an answer, but for the participants to share their concerns and develop their understanding. Don't set yourself up as the final arbiter. Let the group decide what it believes and correct itself when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Often questions or comments are directed at the leader, but they can be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon. A look back over territory that has been covered provides a sense of what has been accomplished.

• **A little humor can go a long way.** Making people laugh is especially important in a group of people who don't know each other well. A gracious joke or wry comment can be particularly useful if the atmosphere becomes tense and can pep people up when the discussion is lagging.

• **Don't ignore a lack of interest.** There are many possible reasons for a bored or listless group: the evening's topic may seem irrelevant, the discussion may be on too complex or too simple a level, the discussion may be wandering, it may be time for a break, people may be intimidated by the leader or another person in the group, or everyone may simply be tired. Introducing some humor or an activity or game you feel comfortable leading may restore interest and lift spirits. If all else fails, the lack of interest should be dealt with directly. You might ask in a non-threatening way, "What's going on here tonight? How come no one seems interested?" The answer may have something to do with the leader's handling of the study circle, but adapting to constructive criticism is part of the spirit of a good study circle.

Using Questions Effectively

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line,"

and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not. Encourage someone to play devil's advocate, if necessary.

• **Be aware of how your questions are directed.** Varying your questions by directing some toward particular participants and others to the group at large can help you manage the discussion.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" do not lend themselves to short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Avoid leading questions.** The leader who asks "Are you uncomfortable with this line of reasoning?" rather than "What do you think of this line of reasoning?" may be interjecting her own opinion.

• **The overall tone of the session will be enhanced if your questions have a positive tone.** For example, "What problems would have to be overcome?" is very different from "Why won't this approach work?" At evaluation time, "How might the discussion be improved next time?" will probably stimulate a more helpful response than "What went wrong?"

Concluding

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split, and there's no need to hammer out

agreement. Besides, people change their minds after debates more often than during them. (However, if one of your study circle's goals is action, agreement on some points in the final session may be important.)

• **Ending the session early is better than allowing it to drag on.** Sometimes the discussion will come to a conclusion sooner than expected. Give the group the opportunity to revisit an interesting question that was not thoroughly discussed earlier in the session, but be aware that filling time unproductively may jeopardize participants' feelings about the value of the study circle.

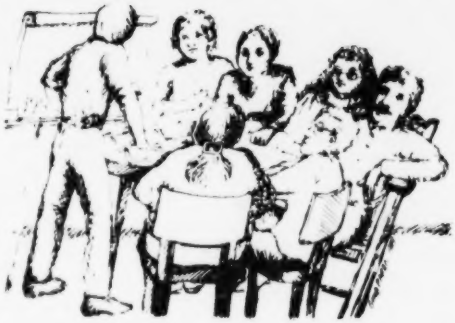
• **Close each session with a summary and perhaps an evaluation.** Remind participants of the overall goals of the program and ask them whether and how the discussion helped the group to move toward that goal. You may want to elicit evaluations for five minutes at the end of each session. You will definitely want evaluations from the group at the midpoint and the final session, and the supplier of the written material may also want a written evaluation at the end. (See the section called "Ending: The Final Session" for ideas.)

4. Beginning: The First Session

Pros and Cons of an Organizational Meeting

The initial session of a study circle is usually the most difficult. Unless an organizational meeting is held, or unless

the participants are part of a pre-existing group, it will be the first time that all the participants come together. Since people will not know each other, the discussion may be a bit tentative at first.



In addition to giving participants the opportunity to meet one another, a preliminary meeting makes organizing the study circle easier, provides an opportunity for further recruitment, offers a chance to find the best time and dates for meetings, simplifies distribution of the readings for the first session, and affords time for a discussion of the philosophy of study circles and the goals of your particular study circle.

The main disadvantage of an organizational meeting is that the more sessions participants are asked to attend, the less likely they are to attend all the sessions. Since most organizers choose not to hold an organizational meeting, the following is written for a study circle in which there is no organizational meeting.

Introductions

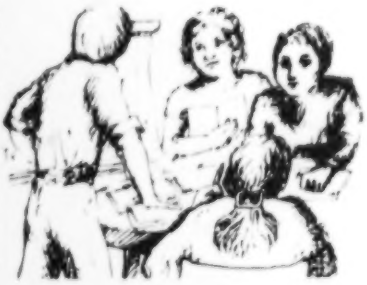
The first meeting of the study circle should begin with an introduction by the organizer, who should explain why he organized the study circle and his goals for the program. The organizer should then explain the philosophy behind study circles. If the group is unfamiliar with study circles, you may

want to distribute copies of "Appendix A: The Role of the Participant." Finally, the organizer should introduce the leader and turn the floor over to her.

The leader should talk about her background and reasons for agreeing to moderate the discussions. All participants should then be asked to introduce themselves and to describe their backgrounds, why they decided to join the study circle, and their hopes and expectations.

Establishing and Modifying Goals

At this point – right in the beginning – it is essential for the leader to check with the group to make sure there is agreement with the goals the organizer stated earlier. A discussion about the goals of the study circle may be necessary, with participants encouraged to state alternative or additional goals. Any consensus on changing the goals should be incorporated by the leader. Remember: the study circle belongs to the participants, and it works best as a truly democratic group. The organizer and leader should not be seen as "running" it.



Establishing Ground Rules

Once the goals are clear, the leader should establish the ground rules for the discussions. She should also specify plans for managing the discussions and state what she expects from

the participants by emphasizing key points from "Appendix A: The Role of the Participant."

Once the ground rules and mutual expectations have been established, the leader can launch into the topic of the first session.

5. Ending: The Final Session

Synthesis and Conclusions

In many study circles the final session is the highlight of the program. It is a time for the group to look back over previous sessions and to review important conclusions. Participants will be reminded of the ground they have covered and should come away with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

From Discussion to Action

The final session is the ideal time to search for and determine whatever common ground may exist between participants who have different perspectives on issues. Sometimes in the process of grappling with new ideas and working through divergent viewpoints, areas of agreement can be overlooked. It is not necessary to seek consensus and can even be counterproductive, but it is helpful for the group to be aware of those areas in which there is general agreement.

If the group is action-oriented, the final session is also a time to look forward and discuss what the participants can

do to address some of the problems they have examined. This might involve volunteer work, participating in the political process in a variety of ways, organizing educational programs, setting up other study circles, or any of the myriad of ways in which citizens contribute to making our society a better place in which to live.

If the study circle consists of an established group, the group may want to examine its program and priorities in light of what the discussions have revealed. The group might reaffirm its focus and program, or might decide to suggest alternatives to the leaders of the organization.

If leaders of the organization are not participants in the study circle, they could be invited to listen to what participants have to say at the final session. Participants might be encouraged to write a letter or short report to leaders of the organization describing what they gained from the study circle and any suggestions that they have for new programs.

Oral and Written Evaluations

The study circle should conclude with both oral and written evaluations. This is essential and time must be reserved for it. Because the role of the leader is so central in a study circle, the organizer may want to moderate the final evaluation. Participants may be more honest if the leader is not running the evaluation. Each of the participants, including the leader and organizer, should have the opportunity to comment. Discussion of the points made in these assessments should be permitted, but only after all individuals have had the chance to give brief remarks.

A written evaluation should also be completed at the end of the final session. Some people will express in writing what they would prefer not to say in front of the group, especially if they can do so anonymously. Unless the group has agreed to stay later, a half-hour should be reserved for the oral and written evaluations.

Evaluation forms are often provided by suppliers of the written material. The Study Circles Resource Center can provide a sample evaluation form that you can use or adapt.

Appendix A: The Role of the Participant

The participants are the most important ingredients in a study circle. Their interest, enthusiasm, and commitment, along with the skill of the leader, usually determine the success of a study circle.

The goal of a study circle is not to master a text or to learn a lot of facts, but rather to deepen understanding and judgement. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process – democratic discussion among equals – is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group. Some of this advice will be self-evident if you have experience in discussion groups, but these points will be a valuable reminder to even the most experienced participant.

• **Make a good effort to attend all meetings.** The comfort level of the group depends a great deal upon familiarity with other participants, not just as acquaintances or members of the same organization but as participants in this particular group with its own special history and fellowship.

• **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but she may need advice on when something requires clarification. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

• **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how a point relates to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

• **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

• **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak. Keeping a pen handy to jot down your thoughts may help you listen more attentively since you will not be concerned about losing the point you want to make.

• **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

• **Don't withdraw from the discussion.** You have a responsibility beyond that of listening. Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

• **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate as long as you don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Use your critical faculties.** Don't accept without question the statements made by authors of the readings, the leader, or other participants. Think about whether statements are provable; decide whether assertions are based on fact or opinion, feelings or reason, primary or secondary sources; and be on the lookout for deceptive argument techniques such as bandwagon or scare tactics, personal attack, faulty deductive reasoning, and vague generalizations.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you. They have reasons for their beliefs which are usually not dumb, unreasonable, or immoral. You should

be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with since this level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for your own positions.

Appendix B: Further Reading

Many of the ideas presented in this work came from the following sources:

The history of the study circle is thoroughly documented in *Study Circles: Coming Together for Personal Growth and Social Change*, by Leonard P. Oliver, Seven Locks Press, Cabin John, MD, 1987.

Many of the suggestions for organizers and leaders came from the "National Issues Forums Leadership Handbook." NIF can be reached at 100 Commons Road, Dayton, OH 45459-2777, 1-800-433-7834; in Ohio, 1-800-433-4819.

The Center for Conflict Resolution produced *A Manual for Group Facilitators*. Available from CCR at 731 State Street, Madison, WI 53703, the manual broadly discusses group facilitation. Many of the remarks are pertinent to study circles.

A very thorough book called *Discussion: A Guide to Effective Practice*, by David Potter and Martin P. Anderson, published by Wadsworth in Belmont, CA, in 1970, is no longer in print but may be available at your library.

The Alternatives Center distributes an excellent videotape and handbook called *Facilitating a Meeting*. The video consists of scenes from a staff meeting of a small co-operative business. Although it is not about study circles, the video illustrates effectively many of the suggestions for leaders made in this guide. It is available from the Alternatives Center [2375 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704, (415) 644-8336] along with a companion videotape, *Planning a Meeting*, for $75.

Another helpful book is *How to Make Meetings Work* by Michael Doyle and David Straus, Berkeley Publishing Group, New York, 1984.

Appendix C:
Resources Available from the Study Circles Resource Center

Publications of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) include the Public Talk Series (PTS); training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and a bibliography on study circles and small-group learning. Public Talk Series programs are available for $2.00 each. All other publications are free of charge.

Public Talk Series

Write for a list of these economical discussion programs on a variety of current issues.

Pamphlets

"An Introduction to Study Circles." 20 pages.

"Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle" covers the mechanics of starting and running a study circle. 32 pages.

"Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material" speaks both to the individual developing material for a single study circle and to large organizations intending to use the material in many study circles. 32 pages.

Resource Briefs (single pages)

"What Is the Study Circles Resource Center?"
"What Is a Study Circle?"
"Organizing a Study Circle"
"Leading a Study Circle"
"The Role of the Participant"
"Developing Study Circle Course Material"
"The Study Circles Resource Center Clearinghouse"

Connections (single pages describing people and programs)

Adult Religious Education
Youth Programs
Study Circle Researchers
Unions

Other Resources

Clearinghouse list of study circle programs
Annotated bibliography

9/91

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